



# State Rehabilitation Council

Nebraska Department of Education  
301 Centennial Mall South • PO Box 94987 • Lincoln, NE 68509

## State Rehabilitation Council Meeting

Nebraska VR Office

Lincoln, NE

October 8, 2019

### Draft Meeting Minutes

*Public notice of upcoming meetings will be available on the Department of Education website under "Master Calendar" at least 5 days prior to each meeting.*

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Lonnie Berger, Crystal Booker, Jerry Bryan, Michael Bursaw, Kim Davis (substitute for Carly Weyers), Lindy Foley, Chris Gaspari, Gayle Hahn, Susan Madsen, Tobias Orr, Sandy Peterson, Alice Senseney

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Deanna Henke, John McNally, Jonathan Moeller, Vicki Newman, Diane Owen-Downs, David Scott, Adriana Springer, Cassidy Wall, Camie West

**VR STAFF PRESENT:** Sarah Chapin, Angela Fujan, Brigid Griffin, Sandy Hamm, Ashley Hernandez, Mary Matusiak, Victoria Rasmussen

**VISITORS:** Margie Propp, Ben Sparks

*The meeting of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) commenced at 10:07 a.m. public notification of this meeting was made on the Nebraska Department of Education web site.*

### **PUBLIC COMMENT/ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Council members and visitors introduced themselves.

No additional public comment was shared.

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Chris Gaspari moved and Michael Bursaw seconded the motion to approve the agenda as submitted. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent.**

### **APPROVAL OF AUGUST 13, 2019 MINUTES**

Chris Gaspari moved and Michael Bursaw seconded a motion to approve the August 13, 2019 meeting minutes as submitted. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent.**

### **SRC MEMBER AWARD**

Sandy Peterson shared council member, JD Simmons, has completed his term of service to the council and congratulated him on his work. Sandy shared a plaque will be presented to JD.

## **NEBRASKA NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

Victoria Rassmussen introduced via-teleconference Edward C. Bell who is contracted with the Professional Development and Research Institute on Blindness to work on the VR consumer needs assessment. Edward Bell shared a teleconference was held to outline the major areas that need to be completed in the CNA.

Dr. Bell described the five key components of the survey:

1. Survey clients who have recently closed their case or have an open VR case to determine what needs have and have not been addressed.
2. A survey for employees of Nebraska VR
3. Surveying employers of individuals with disabilities in partnership with Nebraska VR
4. Pre-employment transition services clients, this survey has been designed to be completed by the parent/guardian of the youth clients.
5. Other stakeholders survey, including other service providers that work with VR and its clients in some capacity.

Edward reported these surveys have been created and have been reviewed and received some feedback and are currently being posted online for completion. Edward shared SRC members can access the surveys online for review and share any feedback. Chris Gaspari asked which survey family members or caregivers would complete. Chris shared a lot of adult clients have family members and/or daily caregivers/aids, asking if these individuals will be surveyed. Edward shared some of these social workers for example would be covered in the other stakeholders survey. Edward stated he is unsure if daily caregivers have been addressed adequately enough sharing they will need to review the surveys to see which they would be best suited for. Kim Davis stated if clients themselves are unable to complete surveys themselves they may need a caregiver to complete the survey for them stating they may need to note at the end of the survey if the client completed the survey or if it was completed by a caregiver on behalf of the client. Edward stated they can add to the beginning of the survey a note regarding if a caregiver is completing the survey on behalf of the client. Edward shared questions specifically geared towards caregivers are not currently included stating they could be added to the client survey using some skip logic questioning. Sandy Peterson asked how school district staff would be surveyed in conjunction with those clients in Pre-Employment Services. Edward shared they do not have survey questions specifically geared to education staff but stated they could survey generally in the stakeholder category. Brigid Griffin shared they do currently survey education staff working with pre-employment transition services annually; asking if they can combine those results or questions to be included with CNA results. Edward discussed combining information with the existing survey in order to not duplicate efforts. Victoria Rassmussen shared the links will be shared with council members via email which can then be reviewed and commented on. Sandy shared she would appreciate all council members completing the survey and providing feedback. Victoria discussed the CNA timeline stating the surveys will be completed and reported on by the end of December and the results will be included in the combined state plan which will be completed in January. Brigid shared teachers completed surveys in May stating she feels it would be best if that data would be combined with the current surveys instead of having educators re-survey. Victoria shared because of privacy rules VR will be sending out surveys via email to employers, clients and providers. Victoria shared members will have a week to provide feedback after receiving the survey links stating council member input is very important.

## **FOLLOW UP OF LAST MEETINGS ACTION ITEMS**

### **Schultz Recognition**

Angela Fujan shared members were able to review the congrulatory letter draft for Mark Schultz; stating it is ready to be presented along with a plaque. A copy of the letter was shared with members for final review. Members discussed signing the letter and determined the chair or a staff member

will sign on behalf of the council. Angela Fujan shared she will determine what signature is most appropriate with the VR Director and complete the letter as needed.

### **Senator Outreach 2020**

Michael Bursaw reported there an outreach committee meeting which decided to create a thank you card type handout thanking senators for their past support and assistance to Nebraska VR and the SRC. Chris Gaspari shared they would to reserve a table in the State Capitol near the information desk to reach out to senators with the thank yous as well as providing the same information as past years for outreach in February. Chris noted members could also share the thank you cards and information via door knocking in addition to the table. Chris stated the committee is looking for council approval to move forward with this approach. Sandy Hamm stated the table would need to be reserved if the council would like to go in this direction. Members discussed reaching out as a thank you was a more comfortable approach to start the conversation with senators and their staff. Sarah Chapin shared there are two thank you cards written, one from an SRC member and another from the client perspective. Chris stated she finds it more impactful to reach out in a place of appreciation versus just asking for funding. Crystal Booker shared personal stories of clients are more impactful and memorable. Sarah shared there are two new client stories they have which could be utilized as well as “Pathways to Success” videos which could be played in a loop at the outreach table. Sarah discussed all the outreach materials do contain a thread demonstrating all work is done with partners. Sarah discussed interesting devices and assistive technology are always a great icebreaker and point of interest to bring people to an information table. Chris discussed when a person becomes disabled there is no handbook and it is so frustrating not knowing what agencies are available to help you or what to do. Chris discussed how important it is to have a strong network of support and agencies in partnership to assist people with disabilities. Susan Madsen asked who is being missed without “a handbook” in order to get this information into individuals hands. Members discussed medical professionals and hospitals being trained and giving referrals and resources to clients. Sarah discussed sharing with senators the focused message of the importance of employment services and supports for those with disabilities. The thank you letter drafts will be sent to council members for review and the information table will be reserved for February 11<sup>th</sup> as well as reserving the meeting room in the Capitol. Members discussed reaching out to those senators who have supported SRC in the past as well as those who have not. Sarah requested feedback within a week to the thank yous so there is time to have the cards printed. Sarah stated if members would like to have a thank you from another perspective to give her that feedback as well. Sandy Peterson shared she would personally like to contribute to a thank you gift to hand out to senators during outreach. Sandy Hamm stated at the table there can only be wrapped hard candy but there are no restrictions on what can be given when door knocking. Members discussed the potential number of treats that would be needed for gifts to include senators’ staff. Susan Madsen shared she has a pastry chef at her employer they could utilize to create goodies. ATP will collaborate to share display technology for the table.

### **NCSRC login information**

Angela Fujan shared NCSRC teleconferences are quarterly, reporting the information is sent out to the SRC chair and herself who will then pass on the information to all council members.

### **MEMBER FEEDBACK ON VR**

Sandy Peterson asked council members if any feedback was brought to council members. Susan Madsen shared a great experience with the VR representatives including, Blane Harvey, working with the client interns at The Cornhusker.

Chris Gaspari suggested the SRC send thank yous or notes of appreciation to VR counselors, staff and clients when good things are heard by council members. Sarah Chapin stated she can assist in creating these.

No additional feedback was shared.

### **MEMBER FEEDBACK ON WRITTEN REPORTS**

Members were asked for feedback on the written reports provided from ATP, NYLC and the Client Assistance Program. Jerry Bryan discussed the cases of the CAP report sharing the cases were able to move forward in a pretty straight forward manner. Tobias Orr shared ATP will be holding an open house to celebrate there 30 year anniversary and members are encouraged to attend. No additional feedback was provided.

### **DIRECTORS REPORT**

Lindy Foley delivered the VR Director's report. Lindy reported in July, Nebraska VR was awarded approximately 1.2 million dollars in state funds, allowing approximately 300 individuals to be taken off the waitlist in July. Lindy shared these dollars were also able to decrease the penalty accrued a couple of years ago as well as increasing the match that could be used for requesting additional federal funds. Lindy reported at the beginning of September VR was awarded the full funding of approximately 5.7million dollars. Lindy shared with these increased funds they have been looking at how many individuals can be pulled off and within what timeframe considering the agency has 48 vacancies. As a reminder, the agency was under a hiring freeze since fall of 2017. Lindy shared 1000 individuals were removed from the waiting list the week of October 1. Lindy discussed the budget review committee has continued to meet on a monthly basis and this helps to determine how many individuals will be removed in the next phase (Dec-January). Lindy reported now the goal is to build up VR capacity to fill positions and support case loads so the plan for removing individuals from the waiting list is as aggressive as possible. Lindy shared herself and Victoria Rasmussen are in the process of team tours to see how this is working to continue to successfully pull individuals off the waitlist. Chris Gaspari asked if there is a funding cap for each client. Lindy shared no there is no set dollar amount for cases sharing it is a case by case basis based on the needs of the client. Lindy reported waitlist numbers as of today: Priority Group One- 1,352. Priority Group Two- 702, Priority Group Three- 394. Susan Madsen asked how long these individuals have been waiting for services. Lindy shared the longest someone in Priority Group 1 has been waiting for VR services is one year (October 2018. Because VR is not currently serving individuals in Priority Groups 2 and 3 those individuals have not received VR services since Order of Selection was implemented. Lindy also shared there is a regional planning meeting with neighboring states next week. This will be an opportunity for VR staff to network and learn from other state VR staff (region includes: Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri and Iowa).

### **OVERVIEW OF SRC MEMBER ROLES**

Lindy Foley discussed in response to last meeting's question of defining the council member role, there are a number of responsibilities of the SRC. Lindy highlighted some of those responsibilities including: reviewing VR services & procedures, providing input, evaluation standards, advisement and incorporation of Native American VR services. Lindy shared she wants to provide the council with updates so members are informed to answer questions from community members, as well as getting council guidance on internal workings such as the electronic newsletter discussed at the last meeting that is now being utilized. Lindy stated the expertise and knowledge of the council is very useful. The council is to be composed of at least 15 members including representation from SILC, PTI, CAP, a VR counselor, 4 representatives of business, 4 representatives of disability groups and representation for the State Department of Education. Lindy shared informational links will be provided and shared with the meeting minutes. Lindy stated she will include resources for members

as there is an abundance of information available. Lindy shared she would also like to provide resources in how VR is connected in partnership with other service providers and organizations. Lindy shared there is an SRC handbook from NCSRC that will be provided to members stating there are some small differences from state to state how they are structured as Nebraska VR falls under the Department of Education and not the Governor's office as in some states. Sandy Peterson shared she wants to make sure all members are comfortable with their roles and understanding what their role is. Crystal Booker asked if there are open positions on the council and which roles particularly need to be recruited. Angela Fujan shared the council could use a Developmental Disability representative, an additional employer representative, as well as always needing individuals with disabilities. There is a council member application available on the SRC website.

### **DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AND INCLUSION AWARDS**

Mary Matusiak reviewed the process of selection of the Disability Employment and Inclusion Awards to be held following today's meeting. Mary outlined the five award categories which will be awarded at 1:00pm. Mary reported the Commissioner of Education, Matt Blomstedt, with VR Director, Lindy Foley, will be presenting and recognizing the award recipients. Sarah Chapin shared it is looking promising there will be media attending the Awards.

### **NEXT MEETING**

February 11, 2020 – Downtown, Lincoln, NE. Space to be determined pending a State Capitol room reservation or conference room at the State Office Building.

### **ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 11:54 a.m.

### **ACTION ITEMS:**

- Senator Outreach
  - Thank-you cards approval & printing
  - Capitol table reservation
  - Goodies for Senator offices distribution
  - Capitol meeting room reservation
  - Assistive technology for table demonstration
  - Client success stories for outreach table
- SRC notes of appreciation for VR staff & clients (Sarah Chapin & Chris Gaspari)